

August 1995

Frank W. Nelte

THE POWER OF THE HOLY PEOPLE SHALL BE SCATTERED

Many people have wondered about Daniel 12:7.

And I heard the man clothed in linen, which [was] upon the waters of the river, when he held up his right hand and his left hand unto heaven, and swore by him that liveth for ever that [it shall be] for a time, times, and an half; AND WHEN HE SHALL HAVE ACCOMPLISHED TO SCATTER THE POWER OF THE HOLY PEOPLE, ALL THESE [THINGS] SHALL BE FINISHED. (Daniel 12:7)

People have looked at the changes that have taken place in the Church of God since Mr. Armstrong's death. They have looked at the new churches that have sprung up from the Worldwide Church of God as a response to the introduction of heretical teachings into WCG. And they have wondered: "Is THIS what Daniel was talking about?"

Let's examine the whole situation more closely.

FOR A START: THE BACKGROUND

In the late 1920's there were a very small number of people in the United States who made up the Church of God. There were also then, and in the subsequent decades, small pockets of people in various other countries who were a part of the ailing Church of God.

God brought Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong into contact with these people and then used Mr. Armstrong to raise up the present era of the Church. The Church grew at approximately 30% per year till about 1968. In the early 70'ies there were some setbacks, but the growth continued. By the time Mr. Armstrong died in January 1986 Church attendance and Feast of Tabernacles attendance were both well in excess of 100 000 people.

But that figure does not really reveal the Church's real scope and impact. The Plain Truth magazine had at its peak a circulation of around 7 million copies, the Church's radio and television program was on many, many stations and Mr. Armstrong had had personal contacts with very many world leaders. The Church, through its Foundation, was involved in many different projects around the world. Millions of booklets and magazines were being distributed free of charge to those who requested information from the Church.

Without question during Mr. Armstrong's time the Worldwide Church of God had a certain amount of "power", or an impact way beyond the size of its actual membership. There are many churches in this world that had far more members than the Worldwide Church of God; yet the impact they have on people beyond their own membership is insignificant when compared to the impact the Worldwide Church of God had during Mr. Armstrong's time.

For a few years after Mr. Armstrong's death things continued in a relatively steady way with even some increases in various areas. But there was also a steady, if unnoticeable at first, erosion of the Church's teachings and beliefs. Gradually it became more and more obvious to most people that the Church was indeed in the process of overturning all of its traditional beliefs. From about 1990 onwards a decline

started to set in, gradually at first. From then onwards a steady stream of ministers and members started to leave the Church. It came to a head at the end of 1994 and at the start of 1995 with Mr. Tkach's introduction of the new covenant theology, which did away with the remaining foundational beliefs of the Church.

THE PRESENT SITUATION

Now, barely six months later, the Church is struggling just to survive. Over 150 ministers have been disfellowshipped, terminated or pressured to resign or to retire in just the past few months. Tens of thousands of members have left the Worldwide Church of God. Many have joined the new churches that have been started ... the United Church, the Global Church, the Philadelphia Church and even the Church of God, International. There are also numerous other smaller splinter groups.

The income of the Church has dropped to precipitously low levels. Many faculty members of Ambassador University have been terminated. The Church has cut its subsidies to the university, to the AICF foundation and to its international offices. The magazine circulation has been drastically slashed. The television program has been terminated. In an attempt to improve the cashflow many assets are up for sale.

Those who have left the Worldwide Church include many long-standing ministers and people in key positions of leadership ... regional directors, regional pastors, the business manager of the Church, members of the Board of Ambassador University, the President of Ambassador University, prominent professors and lecturers of the university, etc.. This is not some small revolt by a handful of conspirators. Not at all! This is a clear reaction to the introduction of heretical teachings into the Church.

Without doubt this is the worst crisis that the Worldwide Church of God has experienced since Mr. Armstrong first began publishing the Plain Truth in 1934. The credibility of the Church itself stands in question, and rightly so! And the credibility of Ambassador University also stands in question. And yes ...

THE POWER THAT THE CHURCH ONCE HAD HAS INDEED BEEN SCATTERED!

How are we to understand all these things? What will it lead to and how will it all end? Let's see what God tells us about all this through His Word, the Bible.

Let's start by examining Daniel chapter 12.

DANIEL CHAPTER 12

AND AT THAT TIME shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation [even] to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book. (Daniel 12:1)

The words "AND AT THAT TIME" clearly refer to what has been said just before this:

And he shall plant (or shall have planted) the tabernacles of his palace between the seas in the glorious holy mountain; YET HE SHALL COME TO HIS END, and none shall help him. (Daniel 11:45)

So the timing of Dan. 12:1 is the time when the "beast power", and specifically the leader of that group of nations, comes to an end. It is the time when Christ returns to this Earth to intervene in world affairs.

And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall AWAKE, some TO EVERLASTING LIFE, and some to shame [and] everlasting contempt. (Daniel 12:2)

Here two different resurrections are referred to, about 1100 years apart. The first resurrection (i.e. "to everlasting life") takes place at Christ's return.

And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever. (Daniel 12:3)

Those who "shine as the brightness of the firmament" and "as the stars" refers to individuals who will be in the first resurrection. Let's look at this verse more closely:

- "they that be wise" is the verb "sakal" which is used with the hiphil stem. This stem refers to causative action. This phrase thus means: "they that give insight", "they that CAUSE people to consider", "they that teach", etc.;

- "shall shine" is the verb "zahar", also with the hiphil stem. This verb is used 22 times in the O.T. and 18 times it is translated as "warn". Here it means: "they shall WARN" or "they shall admonish", rather than "they shall shine". What shines is the warning they give!

- "they that turn many to righteousness" means "they that bring justice in administering the law to many people".

This verse, verse 3, in effect tells us that those who give people an insight into the truth of God and in the process warn people about the consequences of disobedience to God, are going to be in the first resurrection, shining like stars.

But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, [even] to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased. (Daniel 12:4)

This verse tells us that these things would not be understood till our time today, "the time of the end". Our age would be characterized, amongst other things, by a knowledge-explosion.

Then I Daniel looked, and, behold, there stood other two, the one on this side of the bank of the river, and the other on that side of the bank of the river. (Daniel 12:5)

In this vision Daniel saw two more individuals.

And [one] said to the man clothed in linen, which [was] upon the waters of the river, HOW LONG [SHALL IT BE TO] THE END OF THESE WONDERS? (Daniel 12:6)

THIS VERSE IS IMPORTANT! It is a question about timing. The question was obviously phrased for Daniel's and for our benefit, not for the benefit of the spirit beings involved in the vision.

The question is about the time period LEADING UP TO Christ's return. It is: how long UNTIL these things take place?

And I heard the man clothed in linen, which [was] upon the waters of the river, when he held up his right hand and his left hand unto heaven, and swore by him that liveth for ever that [it shall be] for a time, times, and an half; and when he shall have accomplished to scatter the power of the holy people, all these [things] shall be finished. (Daniel 12:7)

Firstly, the angel "swearing" by God is a reference that this revelation is directly from God! Next, the time period mentioned is three and one half "times", which often refers to "years".

What we have here is a time period of three and one half years which finishes at Christ's return. That's the question in the previous verse. Thus something significant must take place three and one half years before Christ's return, though we may only see the significance in hindsight.

Let's now carefully examine the last part of this verse. One Hebrew verb is used twice here, something that is not apparent in the English text. The verb "kalah" is first translated as "when he shall have accomplished" and the next time as "all these shall be finished". It is the same verb in Hebrew.

Next, this verb "kalah" is used 206 times in the O.T. and is most commonly translated as "CONSUME". In the first use it is used with the piel stem, which expresses intensive action. Here are a few examples of where this verb "kalah" is used with the same piel stem, and how it is translated in each case.

- Isaiah 1:28 = shall be consumed
- Isaiah 10:18 = shall consume
- Isaiah 15:6 = (the grass) faileth
- Isaiah 27:10 = consume (the branches)
- Isaiah 49:4 = I have spent (my strength)
- Jeremiah 9:16 = till I have consumed
- Ezekiel 20:13 = to consume them

The verb translated "to scatter" (i.e. "naphats") means: to break in pieces, to shatter, to disperse, etc.. It is also used with the piel stem (i.e. intensive action).

The noun translated as "the power" means "the hand" in Hebrew.

So let's put the last part of this verse together:

"... when he shall have completed breaking in pieces (note this!) and shattering completely the power (or hand) of the holy people (i.e. God's true Church), then all these things shall be consumed (rendered as "finished" in the English text)."

Now here is the way I understand this section of this verse:

There is someone (not identified in this verse) who will work at shattering and breaking into pieces the power that the Church of God had achieved. When he has accomplished this breaking into pieces, THEN the "consuming" of the end time will start. That consuming is NOT a reference to the Church but to the consuming in the world, "the time of trouble" of verse 1. This consuming will take three and one half years and will culminate in the return of Jesus Christ. So the "something significant" that takes place three and one half years before Christ's return is that the power of the Church of God will have been COMPLETELY broken in pieces. This may be as a consequence to other significant events. The "someone" not identified in this verse is Satan!

Verse 8 makes clear that the description has been completed. Daniel now presents his own comments.

And I heard, but I understood not: then said I, O my Lord, what [shall be] the end of these [things]? (Daniel 12:8)

The Hebrew word here translated as "end" is occasionally translated as "reward". In plain English, Daniel asks: how is it all going to turn out? That's what we would also like to know.

And he said, Go thy way, Daniel: for the words [are] closed up and sealed till the time of the end. (Daniel 12:9)

This is basically a repetition of what was said in verse 4. These things were not to be understood until the end of this age. There was no need for anyone in a previous age to understand these things, because they didn't apply then. We are now living at the time when these events will confront us.

Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried; but the wicked shall do wickedly: and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand. (Daniel 12:10)

The Hebrew verb translated as "many shall be purified" is used with the hithpael stem, which is the reflexive form. Thus this actually means: "many shall purify THEMSELVES", and is so translated in Young's Literal Translation.

The Hebrew for "and made white" is also in the hithpael stem and means: "yes, make THEMSELVES white". The Hebrew for "and tried" means: "and be refined". The emphasis here is on the active involvement and participation of the individuals themselves ... it is not just something that is done for them.

This verse contrasts two different attitudes: those who are wise (Hebrew here is: consider, ponder, give attention to) shall discern and perceive what is taking place and will take action to clean THEMSELVES up to "be ready" for Christ's intervention. On the other hand, there is a group who CAUSE to do wickedly (the hiphil stem is used here, referring to causative action) and they simply will not understand and will CONTINUE to do wickedly.

Do you grasp what this verse is talking about?

There are two different attitudes in God's Church at the end time. IT IS BY THE WICKED CONTINUING TO DO WICKEDLY THAT THE POWER OF THE CHURCH IS BROKEN INTO LITTLE PIECES. Because the wicked simply continue in their wicked ways, THEREFORE those who make an effort to purify themselves to be made white by God feel pressured to scatter. This is a defence against compromising their commitment and integrity towards God.

The last three verses (Daniel 12:11-13) talk about a timing. I personally am not sure at this time how this applies. Therefore I see no point in commenting on these verses in this article. Be sure you understand the first 10 verses of this chapter and don't worry too much about the last 3 verses. They will become clear in due time.

THE FAMINE OF THE WORD

Every piece of revelation that is given in the Bible, is given for a purpose. There is no such thing as God inspiring something to be recorded which God did not want to be understood. However, God did not necessarily want everything He inspired to be understood at the time that He inspired it to be written. That is clear from the verse we have just looked at, where God said: "go your way, Daniel, for the words are closed and sealed up TILL the time of the end" (Daniel 12:9).

So we should understand that EVERYTHING that God has inspired in the Bible God intends for some people to understand at SOME time. This is also made clear in Amos 3:7:

Surely the Lord GOD will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets.
(Amos 3:7)

The closer we come to the time when Christ will return to this Earth, the more understanding God is going to give to those of us who are faithfully trying to serve Him. The very fact that there is a great pressure on us to "LET GO" of the things we understood during Mr. Armstrong's time, is why God instructs us as follows:

Behold, I come quickly: HOLD THAT FAST WHICH THOU HAST, that no man take thy crown.
(Revelation 3:11)

God instructs us to hold fast to the truth we have. And those who hold fast are the ones to whom God will give MORE understanding as the time of Christ's intervention draws closer.

The fear of the LORD [is] the beginning of wisdom: A GOOD UNDERSTANDING have all they that do [his commandments]: his praise endureth for ever. (Psalm 111:10)

That "good understanding" also depends on "seeking God":

God looked down from heaven upon the children of men, TO SEE IF THERE WERE [ANY] THAT DID UNDERSTAND, THAT DID SEEK GOD. (Psalm 53:2)

[When thou saidst], Seek ye my face; my heart said unto thee, THY FACE, LORD, WILL I SEEK.
(Psalm 27:8)

Today we are faced with the situation that the truths that were understood during Mr. Armstrong's time are steadily being LOST by many people who are a part of God's Church. The true doctrines are not being preached. Many people have very quickly and very readily accepted the false teachings that have been introduced into the Church. They are neither holding fast nor seeking to understand the mind of God.

And so we are witnessing the destruction of the Church of God. As God said through the prophet Hosea:

MY PEOPLE ARE DESTROYED FOR LACK OF KNOWLEDGE: BECAUSE THOU HAST REJECTED KNOWLEDGE, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children. (Hosea 4:6)

There is no question that many people in the Church of God today have actively REJECTED the true knowledge of God, and have instead chosen to believe the things they WANT TO believe.

FOR THE TIME WILL COME WHEN THEY WILL NOT ENDURE SOUND DOCTRINE; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; AND THEY SHALL TURN AWAY [THEIR] EARS FROM THE TRUTH, and shall be turned unto fables. (2 Timothy 4:3-4)

This is a description of the Church of God today, in 1995. We need to recognize that many people simply DON'T WANT "sound doctrine". Unless we face up to this reality, we will end up very frustrated and very discouraged, trying to get other people to see the foolishness of the false teachings. They just don't want to see it. We need to understand this!

And so, as many people have accepted false ideas and false teachings, we have entered a time when the truth of God is not going to be readily available. There is now already "a famine" for those who want to hear the truth of God preached.

Behold, the days come, saith the Lord GOD, that I WILL SEND A FAMINE IN THE LAND, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but OF HEARING THE WORDS OF THE LORD: (Amos 8:11)

God said that He is the One who would CAUSE such a "famine" to come about. Notice this point! God is involved! Further, let's face the facts: for the world at large there has thus far ALWAYS been "a famine of the word". The vast majority of the people in this world have never heard the true explanations of what the Word of God actually means. Oh yes, they may have a Bible in their homes; they may even go to some church or other; but they have never understood the truth. They have always been starved, as far as taking in the truth of God is concerned. To send "a famine of the word" makes very little difference to the people of this world.

But a famine "of hearing the words of the LORD" makes an enormous difference to the people of God's Church!

Understand that Amos 8:11 applies to the people of God's Church. God said that the time would come when those who really WANT to hear the words of God would be faced with a famine in this regard. The word "famine" refers to: a scarcity in the supply of something specific. It is only by the people of God that a scarcity in the supply of understanding the words of God would be perceived as "a famine". And it is only the people of God who would actually make a great effort to overcome that famine ... to once again achieve a regular and an abundant access to the truth of God. As the next verse says ...

And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, THEY SHALL RUN TO AND FRO TO SEEK THE WORD OF THE LORD, AND SHALL NOT FIND [IT]. (Amos 8:12)

This verse is speaking about God's people. They are the only ones who would go to such lengths to hear the truth of God once again.

It seems clear to me that Amos 8:11-12 is speaking about the true believers in the Church of God at "the time of the end", a time when others would be turning away from the truth towards believing "fables", i.e. heresies! In Daniel 12:3 we saw the reference to those who will give God's people an insight into the truth of God and warn people about the consequences of disobedience to God. That is also referred to in the previous chapter of Daniel.

DANIEL CHAPTER 11

In Daniel chapter 11 God has given us a secular historical rundown from Daniel's own time to the second coming of Christ. Within this context God has included an unmistakable reference to the Church of God. It is found in verses 32 to 35.

Verse 35 makes clear that this is a reference to things pertaining to "the time of the end". So these verses tell us something about God's Church at the time just prior to Christ's return. Notice the context:

And arms shall stand on his part, and they shall pollute the sanctuary of strength, and shall take away the daily [sacrifice], AND THEY SHALL PLACE THE ABOMINATION THAT MAKETH DESOLATE. (Daniel 11:31)

IT IS IN THIS CONTEXT THAT THE REFERENCE TO THE CHURCH OF GOD IS INTRODUCED!

Now remember that Daniel chapter 11 is a discussion of SECULAR leaders down to the time of Christ's return. It is a discussion about KINGDOMS. It is not a discussion about the Church of God at all. But it is after a reference to the abomination of desolation that this brief section about God's Church is inserted into the general storyflow. Think about this for a while! Can you understand WHY it is at this precise point that a reference to the Church of God is introduced?

The "abomination that makes desolate" is a reference to something that is initiated by secular rulers. Now notice the next verse which introduces the Church of God into this discussion ...

And SUCH AS DO WICKEDLY AGAINST THE COVENANT shall he corrupt by flatteries: BUT THE PEOPLE THAT DO KNOW THEIR GOD shall be strong, and do [exploits]. (Daniel 11:32)

For a start, notice two things here: "the people that do know their God" is a very clear reference to true Christians! That is totally clear. Nobody else knows the true God! Nobody else! Secondly, what exactly does it mean "to do wickedly against the covenant"? What is it that they are doing against the covenant? Think about this verse.

To understand what is meant by "the covenant" in this verse, we should look at every other place in the Book of Daniel where this word is used. The word "covenant" (Hebrew is "beriyth") appears exactly 7 times in the book of Daniel: Daniel 9:4, 27; Daniel 11:22, 28, 30, 30, 32.

In Daniel 9:4 Daniel himself in his prayer refers to the covenant God has made with "them that love Him". In Daniel 9:27 the angel Gabriel said that Jesus Christ would "confirm the covenant" with many for one week. In Daniel 11:22 a leader referred to as "a vile person" would overcome "THE PRINCE OF the covenant". Historically this very likely was fulfilled by Antiochus Epiphanes dealing with the Jewish High

Priest at that time. In Daniel 11:28, still dealing with Antiochus Epiphanes, we have a reference to the fact that "HIS HEART shall be against the holy covenant". This is speaking about someone who has A HOSTILE ATTITUDE towards the holy covenant that God has made with Israel.

Daniel 11:28 is very important to understand. We are dealing with a historical personage, Antiochus Epiphanes; but what God has highlighted for us is THE MAN'S HOSTILE ATTITUDE towards the covenant God has made! This is again highlighted in verse 30. Here we are told that IN DEFEAT this individual has "INDIGNATION AGAINST THE HOLY COVENANT".

In the Hebrew "have indignation" is the verb "za'am" and it is used with the qal stem in the perfect tense. The perfect tense in Hebrew expresses a completed action. With the qal stem this verb means: to denounce, to be defiant, to be abhorrent. So in this verse God tells us about an individual who denounces His covenant and is defiant towards it. In the second part of verse 30 this individual with this hostile attitude communicates with those that "FORSAKE THE HOLY COVENANT".

We have now examined all six references to "the covenant" that precede the one we saw in Daniel 11:32. We should now be in a position to understand what is being talked about when suddenly the Church of God at the end-time is introduced. We are dealing with an individual who has a hostile attitude towards the covenant God has made (which covenant Jesus Christ will confirm!), who denounces and abhors the covenant and who is seeking out those who are willing to forsake this covenant.

The reason God introduces the Church of God in this particular context is because there are VERY CLEAR PARALLELS between what happened at the time of Antiochus Epiphanes and what is happening in the Church of God at the time of the end. There is a leader in the Church of God, Mr. Joseph W. Tkach, who has a hostile attitude towards the covenant of God ("the old covenant was a TERRIBLE taskmaster"), who has denounced the covenant of God and who is seeking allies amongst those who are willing to forsake the covenant.

Let's look again at verse 32.

And such as do wickedly against the covenant shall he corrupt by flatteries: but the people that do know their God shall be strong, and do [exploits].

Those who really DO know the true God and what He expects from us are going to be STRONG! Does that include you? Are you "strong" in your opposition to the heresies?

In this verse the Hebrew verb for "shall he corrupt" is used with the hiphil stem (i.e. causative action) and the imperfect tense. This literally means that "he CAUSES them to be defiled or godless or polluted or corrupted". And he achieves this "by flatteries", the same way as he had done back in verse 21. So those who succumb to the flatteries end up acting "wickedly against the covenant" of God!

This is speaking about the situation that is extant in the Church of God RIGHT NOW!

Now notice the next verse.

AND THEY THAT UNDERSTAND AMONG THE PEOPLE SHALL INSTRUCT MANY: yet they shall fall by the sword, and by flame, by captivity, and by spoil, [many] days. (Daniel 11:33)

This is where I feel those of us who are today, in the face of these heretical ideas, teaching God's people

the truth, and encouraging all of us in God's Church to "earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto us" (see Jude 1:3), fit into the picture. We are "instructing" many.

At the very time that the leadership of the Church has, by means of flatteries, introduced many heresies and an animosity towards the covenant God made with His people to obey ALL of His laws not only in the letter but ALSO in their spiritual intent, God has seen to it that there are those who DO understand and who ARE WILLING to explain the truth in spite of opposition.

I don't by any means believe that I am somehow the only one who is speaking out against the heresies. I am assuredly NOT the only one. God HAS reserved a people unto Himself who have not bowed the knee to Baal! Our calling is "TO INSTRUCT MANY" as long as God makes that possible.

With the articles I have been writing, countering the heresies that have been introduced into God's Church, I am trying to help stabilize those people who have been unsettled by all these heresies. The same is true for many other men, who have at this very same time also spoken out and written against these heretical changes that have been imposed on the Church. Those who really UNDERSTAND what has been happening in the Church have a responsibility before God to help all those people who have been confused and deceived by clever arguments. As God told Daniel:

They that understand among the people shall instruct many ...! (Daniel 11:33)

Let's look at the next verse.

Now when they shall fall, they shall be holpen with a little help: but many shall cleave to them with flatteries. (Daniel 11:34)

The reference in verses 33 and 34 to "THEY shall fall" seems to me to refer to both, those that understand as well as those that are instructed? The point in this verse is that God does provide help to make it possible for people to be instructed. God will see to it that such instruction is available, at least for a period of time.

The expression "many shall cleave to them with flatteries" has been true throughout the history of the Church. We need to understand this! People have always used "flatteries" as a means of advancing themselves. I mean "some" people, not all people. That is why God included this statement as a warning as long as 2500 years ago.

There were those who flattered Mr. Armstrong, trying to create the impression of absolute loyalty, when they really didn't agree with Mr. Armstrong and, in some cases, didn't even like Mr. Armstrong. Their motive was to advance the self. Flattery is always a trap! We are tested before God by our responses to flattery.

Now notice the next verse. This is where we see quite clearly that this section refers to our time.

And [some] of them of understanding shall fall, to try them, and to purge, and to make [them] white, [EVEN] TO THE TIME OF THE END: because [it is] yet for a time appointed. (Daniel 11:35)

First notice that this verse applies to "the time of the end". That is, in general terms, our time today! Next, remember that in verse 33 those with understanding were instructing people. NOW in verse 35 we see

that even of these who have understanding some shall fall. Who is this speaking about?

It seems to me that verse 33 is speaking about ministers in the Church of God, specifically at the time-period of the "Worldwide Church of God", that understood the truth of God and made this plain to the people in the Church of God. Their teaching was sound and their explanations made sense. It was easy to follow their logic. The reasoning was sound.

In the nearly 10 years since Mr. Armstrong's death SOME of those teachers have turned away from the truth they once taught God's people. They have "LET GO" of the truth they had, and they have turned their ears to fables and to philosophy.

God is allowing this for a specific purpose. There are a considerable number of people who attend the Church of God and who totally abrogate all responsibility for what they believe. They tranquillize their consciences by reasoning like this:

"This is God's Church and Jesus Christ is the Head of it (correct thus far). THEREFORE God will not permit heresies to be taught in HIS Church (this is false). Therefore I should believe whatever headquarters tells me to believe, even if it is in the form of a flattery (this is obviously also false). However, IF it turns out that any teaching really IS wrong before God, THEN it is up to Jesus Christ to make the people at the top correct this error (this reasoning is a copout)."

Understand that God does not want unthinking "yes-men" in His eternal Family! God not only wants us to use our minds; He REQUIRES us to use our minds. It is THE MIND that God tests! God wants to know that we will willingly submit to Him totally and unconditionally WITH OUR MINDS! There are two main ways God tests us to find this out. Firstly, God wants to know if we will submit to His laws and instructions; whether we gladly accept His way of life. Secondly, God wants to know whether we will resolutely and forcefully RESIST the temptation to accept any other way of life, no matter how attractive and plausible it may appear. Do we believe GOD ... or do we believe what PEOPLE tell us God supposedly says and means?

In plain terms, God wants to know that we will DO what He tells us to do, and RESIST doing what we should not do or believe.

Remember Romans 3:4:

God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged. (Romans 3:4)

To allow someone, anyone, to tell us that any verse in the Bible doesn't really mean what it ON THE SURFACE "SEEMS" TO MEAN, is a way of disbelieving God. Oh certainly, there are places in the KJV of the Bible where the translation does not accurately reflect what the Hebrew or Greek text actually says. This is the case even far more often with any of the other translations. And in such cases we should be open to what the original text means. But it should never be the case of needing to "explain away" correctly translated clear statements.

Now back to Daniel 11:35. Here God tells us that THE EXPRESS PURPOSE for some of the men of "understanding" falling away from the truth is so that the membership of the Church will be TESTED (or "tried"). The reason is that God wants to "PURGE OUT" those who don't really believe Him, those who are only clinging to the Church "with flatteries", those who will readily let someone talk them out of believing the inspired words of God and talk them into accepting "fables" instead. The result of this

testing is that the weak and undecided ones are purged out and the rest are "made white" before God. Will people go along with FALLEN "men of understanding" because these men have "a reputation" for understanding ... or will they RESIST the ideas of those who have fallen and erred? This is what God wants to find out!

Understand this: if we will not believe the clear, correctly translated words of God and instead accept the words of men, THEN GOD WILL ALSO REJECT US!

Now understand this also: it is through the influence of those of understanding who have fallen that the power of the holy people is scattered. Daniel 11:35 is speaking about exactly the same time as Daniel 12:7.

GOD HOLDS THE MINISTRY RESPONSIBLE

In the Hebrew O.T. there are several different terms used for religious leaders. The four main English words we need to understand in this regard are: shepherds, pastors, prophets and priests.

The Hebrew word for "prophets" is used for God's true prophets as well as for false prophets, prophets of Baal, etc.. It is a masculine noun which also has a feminine form (i.e. prophetess).

The Hebrew word for "priest" is "kohen" or "cohen", which is used 750 times in the Old Testament. It is used both, for God's true priests as well as for pagan priests, just like the word for "prophets".

The English words "shepherds" and "pastors" are a translation of the same one Hebrew word "ra'ah". This word "ra'ah" is actually a verb and NOT a noun! In the O.T. KJV the word "shepherd/s" is used 65 times and 63 times it is a translation of "ra'ah". {In the other two places it is "ro'iy", which is derived from "ra'ah".} The word "pastor/s" appears 8 times in the O.T. KJV and it is always a translation of this verb "ra'ah".

So the first thing we need to recognize is that in the O.T. there is absolutely no difference between the terms "pastors" and "shepherds". Both these words are a translation of one Hebrew verb. Next, this verb "ra'ah" means: TO FEED, TO PASTURE. The English noun "pasture" literally means: a feeding place for sheep and cattle.

Shepherds and pastors are the same thing. The words simply emphasize slightly different aspects. The word "shepherd" focuses on looking after and taking care of the sheep. The word "pastor" focuses on providing food for the sheep, which directly ties in with the Hebrew word "ra'ah". These two words have a slightly different focus but they refer to the same individuals.

Now here is the point to understand: the Hebrew VERB for "to feed" is never used for ministers or religious leaders of false churches. Religious leaders of false churches (e.g. of Baal, etc.) are never referred to as "feeding people", i.e. as "pastors" or as "shepherds". They are only referred to as "prophets" or as "priests".

When the verb "ra'ah" (i.e. shepherds or pastors) is used in a critical and corrective context, it is referring to ministers in God's Church (or in O.T. Israel) and NOT to ministers in any of the world's false churches. This is an important key that we need to understand! It is then a reference to ministers who are not doing the job they should be doing. The places where the words "pastors" or "shepherds" are used in the O.T. have nothing to do with ministers in false churches.

I mention this because sometimes we would like to look at God's indictment of the "shepherds" and

"pastors" of Israel and apply these Scriptures to the ministers of the world's churches.

BUT THAT IS NOT WHO THESE SCRIPTURES ARE TALKING ABOUT!

These Scriptures are really speaking about ministers in God's Church who deal with God's people and they are NOT doing what God wants them to do! Think about this carefully. Do you understand that God's focus in the Scriptures is not on condemning ministers in false churches? God is not really involved with the false churches ... or with their ministers. And where God DOES want to focus on the ministers of false churches, He has used the words "prophets" or "priests", which refer to people who "SPEAK". Furthermore, how could the verb "to feed" POSSIBLY be applied to ministers of false churches? It is impossible for them to "feed" anyone spiritually, just as surely as it was impossible for the priests of Baal, even the nicest one among them, to really "feed" people spiritually.

So now let's look at a few passages in God's Word.

My people hath been lost sheep: THEIR SHEPHERDS HAVE CAUSED THEM TO GO ASTRAY, they have turned them away [on] the mountains: they have gone from mountain to hill, they have forgotten their restingplace. (Jeremiah 50:6)

This is talking about ministers in God's Church CAUSING members of God's Church to go astray! The people in the world's churches were astray to start with, even without having any ministers. This verse is speaking about people who AT ONE STAGE were on the right track! But their ministers CAUSED them to go astray!

Yea, [they are] greedy dogs [which] can never have enough, and THEY [ARE] SHEPHERDS [THAT] CANNOT UNDERSTAND: THEY ALL LOOK TO THEIR OWN WAY, EVERY ONE FOR HIS GAIN, from his quarter. (Isaiah 56:11)

Again, this is a verse we would like to use for the ministers in false churches ... but that is not what God is talking about! The whole context of this chapter is God's Church; verse 3 tells us that there will be non-Israelites in God's kingdom and verse 7 tells us that there will be no racial separation regarding access to God's Church.

Isaiah 56:11 is a reference to ministers in God's Church who act from a selfish motivation. This is not my idea! It is what God tells us! And it is really no different from what Paul told the Philippians about the majority of ministers in his (Paul's) time.

For I have no man likeminded, who will naturally care for your state. FOR ALL SEEK THEIR OWN, NOT THE THINGS WHICH ARE JESUS CHRIST'S. (Philippians 2:20-21)

Paul was here speaking about the ministers who served under his leadership. It is like what Paul told the ministers from Ephesus in Acts 20:

For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. ALSO OF YOUR OWN SELVES SHALL MEN ARISE, SPEAKING PERVERSE THINGS, to draw away disciples after them. (Acts 20:29-30)

The ministers from Ephesus to whom Paul was speaking were not really any different from ministers in God's Church 1900 years later. And most of you have heard some of us ministers TODAY speak "perverse things"!

In Jeremiah chapter 23 a whole section is devoted to a discussion of the bad ministers within God's Church! Notice briefly:

WOE BE UNTO THE PASTORS THAT DESTROY AND SCATTER THE SHEEP OF MY PASTURE! saith the LORD. (Jeremiah 23:1)

These are the people who cause "the scattering of the power of the holy people". Read the whole chapter yourself; in it God also refers to "the prophet" and "the priest".

In Ezekiel 34 we have a whole chapter addressed to the ministers in God's Church.

Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD unto the shepherds; WOE [BE] TO THE SHEPHERDS OF ISRAEL THAT DO FEED THEMSELVES! should not the shepherds feed the flocks? (Ezekiel 34:2)

My sheep wandered through all the mountains, and upon every high hill: yea, MY FLOCK WAS SCATTERED UPON ALL THE FACE OF THE EARTH, and none did search or seek [after them]. (Ezekiel 34:6)

[As] I live, saith the Lord GOD, surely because my flock became a prey, and my flock became meat to every beast of the field, because [there was] no shepherd, neither did my shepherds search for my flock, BUT THE SHEPHERDS FED THEMSELVES, AND FED NOT MY FLOCK; (Ezekiel 34:8)

[SEEMETH IT] A SMALL THING UNTO YOU TO HAVE EATEN UP THE GOOD PASTURE, but ye must tread down with your feet the residue of your pastures? and to have drunk of the deep waters, but ye must foul the residue with your feet? (Ezekiel 34:18)

And [as for] my flock, THEY EAT THAT WHICH YE HAVE TRODDEN WITH YOUR FEET; AND THEY DRINK THAT WHICH YE HAVE FOULED WITH YOUR FEET. (Ezekiel 34:19)

That's regrettably a recurring theme in the Bible, a selfish motivation on the part of the ministers. Today, right now, God's Church is in the process of being SCATTERED by our own ministers! The sheep are driven away by the introduction of heresies.

Notice in this last verse (Ezekiel 34:19) that the membership takes in and is sustained by (i.e. they "eat") what the ministers have shown contempt for (i.e. have "fouled with their feet") ... a reference to the true teachings which the sheep still accept and live by, but which the ministry (i.e. those who teach the heresies) ridicules and shows contempt for.

There are many examples that are happening around us right now. For example, there are right now ministers who ...

- have mocked those who still deleaven their homes for Unleavened Bread
- have mocked those who still keep the Sabbath faithfully

- have deceived people into eating leaven during the Days of Unleavened Bread
- have deceived and tricked people into eating pork
- have shown contempt for the Church's previous correct teachings
- are totally misrepresenting our past teachings.

So understand this: while God predicted that His people at the time of the end would be scattered, He also showed that THE MINISTRY is responsible for this scattering. And for that God will punish the ministry!

But God also shows what He will do for His sheep that have been scattered. It is right here in Ezekiel 34:

As a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep [that are] scattered;
SO WILL I SEEK OUT MY SHEEP, AND WILL DELIVER THEM OUT OF ALL PLACES WHERE
THEY HAVE BEEN SCATTERED IN THE CLOUDY AND DARK DAY. (Ezekiel 34:12)

God will seek out His sheep! God will not overlook any who are His true sheep. God will find His true sheep wherever they may have been scattered. What is important is that you and I are real "sheep".

This brings us to some of the places where the scattered sheep have gone.

A principle we should keep in mind is:

EXCEPT THE LORD BUILD THE HOUSE, THEY LABOUR IN VAIN THAT BUILD IT: except the
LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh [but] in vain. (Psalm 127:1)

So we should be looking for evidence that God is indeed involved in the Church we flee to from the heresies being preached in WCG.

God makes clear that He "SENDS" men to do specific jobs. In many cases such men didn't even want the job God had selected for them. You know the examples of Moses and of Jeremiah. Other statements in this regard include:

To hearken to the words of MY SERVANTS THE PROPHETS, WHOM I SENT UNTO YOU, both
rising up early, and sending [them], but ye have not hearkened; (Jeremiah 26:5)

Because they have not hearkened to my words, saith the LORD, WHICH I SENT UNTO THEM
BY MY SERVANTS THE PROPHETS, rising up early and sending [them]; but ye would not hear,
saith the LORD. (Jeremiah 29:19)

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, [thou] that killest the prophets, and stonest THEM WHICH ARE SENT
UNTO THEE, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth
her chickens under [her] wings, and ye would not! (Matthew 23:37)

But equally clearly there have always been those who were NOT sent by God.

I HAVE NOT SENT THESE PROPHETS, YET THEY RAN: I HAVE NOT SPOKEN TO THEM, YET THEY PROPHECIED. (Jeremiah 23:21)

FOR I HAVE NOT SENT THEM, saith the LORD, yet they prophesy a lie in my name; that I might drive you out, and that ye might perish, ye, and the prophets that prophesy unto you. (Jeremiah 27:15)

For they prophesy falsely unto you in my name: I HAVE NOT SENT THEM, saith the LORD. (Jeremiah 29:9)

So in looking for a new fellowship, we need to carefully examine the organization we are thinking of joining. While it is easy to see that God is obviously no longer involved in the Worldwide Church of God, it is more difficult to decide where to go from here. Which of the new groups should we join? I don't really know.

DON'T LOSE SIGHT OF THE BIG PICTURE

We started off by looking at Daniel 12:7. We saw that "the power of the holy people" is indeed being scattered. Satan is responsible for that "scattering". It is his EXPRESS INTENTION to scatter the power God's Church had under Mr. Armstrong's leadership.

Why did we have that "power" back then? Remember how Mr. Armstrong used to explain it? The "power" was obviously of God! We know Revelation 3:8 ... that we had only "A LITTLE STRENGTH". It was God who opened the doors for us. Remember how often Mr. Armstrong would say something like:

"Brethren, if at least 51% of us are really converted and submit ourselves to God, then God will bless the Church (i.e. give us strength and power)."

Do you think Mr. Armstrong was correct when he said this? I believe his statement was basically correct. And I believe that SATAN ALSO KNOWS this.

So here's how I see the big picture:

Since the day Mr. Armstrong died Satan has been working at scattering "the power of the holy people". How did he do that? By inserting the RAZOR-THIN edge of the wedge of doctrinal changes from the day Mr. Armstrong died. That first light tap on the wedge of doctrinal corruption produced a cut in the fabric of God's Church no bigger than the width of a razorblade. It was so minute that almost nobody noticed it.

But an incision had been made! A foothold had been established and Satan was poised to continue tapping-in the wedge of doctrinal corruption. Satan's success ensured that God would withdraw His blessings, as Mr. Armstrong frequently explained.

The gradual insertion of the wedge was so subtle and so deceptive that many people actually thought it was of God! So people started to "REJECT THE KNOWLEDGE GOD HAD GIVEN HIS CHURCH" (see again Hosea 4:6) because the "new truth" conveniently told them what their ears were "itching for" (see again 2 Timothy 4:3). And people in the Church of God, who in their own hearts consider themselves dedicated and converted Christians, turned their ears away from the truth unto fables ... only in "minor issues" of course. You know, things where we could conveniently say: "well, as far as I am concerned, the Bible isn't really clear on this or that and Mr. Armstrong privately (supposedly) told so-and-so that he was wrong in putting this doctrine into the Church", etc., etc..

UNDERSTAND THAT SATAN USES THE MOST INSIGNIFICANT-SEEMING DOCTRINAL CHANGES TO SCATTER THE POWER OF GOD'S CHURCH!

Have we forgotten how subtle and crafty Satan is? Do we really think he will openly and publicly trumpet out his real intentions to us? Don't we understand that it was SATAN'S IDEA that "it takes a little bit of sugar to make the bitter medicine go down"? After first accepting that little bit of sugar, are we NOW trying to spit out the bitter medicine? When we were all little children and our mothers brought us a spoon full of sugar ... weren't we suspicious of what was hidden in the sugar? Didn't we know from experience that the sugar was nothing but a cover-up?

The big picture is that EVERY DOCTRINAL CHANGE INITIATED BY PASADENA SINCE MR. ARMSTRONG'S DEATH was made with the explicit purpose of tapping the wedge of doctrinal corruption further into God's Church, so that the power of the Church would be scattered.

If you believe for one moment that ANY of the over 200 changes Pasadena has made is right and good in the sight of God, then you don't understand what has really happened.

Do we really believe that God would say to Satan: "Alright, I will allow you to introduce heresies into My Church, but only on the condition that for every 20 bad and wrong changes you introduce, you must also introduce ONE change that is right and good in MY sight"? Do we really believe that the fountain in Pasadena can bring forth both, a little bit of sweet water together with a whole lot of BITTER water (see James 3:11)? Would we rather believe that idea than admit that we too may have had a mild dose of "itching ears"?

Anyway, back to the big picture: for the past nine years one doctrinal change after the other has been introduced. The early ones were intended to be "the sugar-coating" of the bitter pill of totally throwing out the truth of God. Many people, including many ministers, went along with quite a number of these early changes ... different people went along with different changes. Which changes people went along with is totally immaterial to Satan. All Satan is interested in is that they DID go along with at least SOME changes.

The result was that gradually many people, including especially ministers (see again Jeremiah 50:6), accepted a whole range of "minor" doctrinal changes. They had forgotten another thing that Mr. Armstrong frequently explained, when he would say:

"GOD WILL NEVER COMPROMISE WITH HIS LAW, NOT EVEN ONE MILLIONTH OF AN INCH!"

Many people DID accept "one millionth of an inch" here and "one millionth of an inch" there. Oh yes, these "millionth of an inch" changes they accepted were mostly minor and seemingly not of very much consequence; but accepting those "very minor" changes DID do one thing: it divided people! There were those people who went along with these "minor" changes and those who didn't. Those divisions put a strain on "walking together".

So by the time the first major split-off came, even some of those who left WCG had absorbed various "millionth of an inch" changes that Satan had injected into WCG virtually from the day that Mr. Armstrong had died. After that the rest of us continued to stay in WCG. By the time the next major split-off came, more people had accepted and absorbed various other "millionth of an inch" doctrinal corruptions. Others had perhaps still resisted those changes. The rest of us stayed in WCG and some of us continued to absorb more doctrinal corruptions, which by then were no longer just on the level of "one

millionth of an inch", while others still continued to resist accepting such changes.

When Mr. Tkach then threw down the gauntlet in January this year, it should have become clear to the rest of us that WCG no longer in any way represented "the Church of God". And so many of us then left the WCG organization. Since those sermons by Mr. Tkach the exodus of members from WCG has certainly accelerated.

But we should never lose sight of the fact that the real issue is that Satan has injected several HUNDRED errors into the Church, with the explicit goal of SCATTERING THE POWER OF THE CHURCH! That is Satan's goal, which God has revealed to us in Daniel 12:7.

Satan is working in exactly the same way as he has done before. Can we not identify his modus operandi? Recall how Satan has previously worked things out in the world.

Very soon after the deaths of the original apostles the true Church of God was replaced by a false one. The false church, with false doctrines, continued to inculcate into its doctrinal portfolio ever more heretical ideas from paganism. By the time Martin Luther and John Calvin and all the other Protestant reformers came along and disagreed with a few of the major doctrines of the Catholic Church, these very same Protestant "REFORMERS" had also absorbed literally HUNDREDS of wrong ideas from the Catholic Church. They accepted so many doctrinal corruptions as biblically correct, as above being questioned or being challenged, that the few doctrinal issues they took exception with are really immaterial.

They, the daughters of the Catholic Church, are not really different from their mother in any significant ways ... as far as GOD is concerned! They merely give the "outward appearance" of being more faithful to the Bible; but they aren't really! Yet many were totally sincere and committed and willing to suffer persecution, even to a degree that most of us today have never faced. They were sincere, but they were deceived. Satan is the master deceiver. And they were just his victims, like everyone else around them.

SATAN HAS AGAIN WORKED IN EXACTLY THE SAME WAY!

The way we are being scattered shows the same Satan at work! Even as Satan inspired doctrinal corruptions in the Catholic Church before the Protestants ever split off, so Satan inspired doctrinal corruptions in the Worldwide Church of God BEFORE the alternate churches ever broke off. And even as the Protestant churches unquestioningly accepted MANY of these doctrinal errors, so some of the people in the new churches have accepted some, or even many, of the doctrinal errors WCG introduced before they themselves split off from WCG.

Can we see that Satan has followed the same basic pattern with us, that he has used in the religions of this world?

This is extremely important for us to grasp!

What we are seeing in the demise of the Worldwide Church of God and in the rise of the new organizations to fill the void left by WCG's collapse, is identical to what Satan orchestrated at the time of the Protestant Reformation. Nothing has changed. It is almost as if the break-up at the Protestant Reformation (i.e. the break-up of the false church) was a dress-rehearsal for how Satan would later achieve the break-up of the true Church of God. What is important is that the new churches of God RECOGNIZE all the wrong ideas Satan managed to inject into WCG before they themselves split off from WCG.

But the sad truth is that Satan has been successful. We have indeed been scattered!

That's exactly what God predicted through Daniel.

Depending on which church true Christians are associating with, they will face greater or lesser pressure to "LET GO" of some of the things they had learned. God's instruction to His people, in whatever environment they are now living, is: "HOLD FAST THAT WHICH YOU HAVE THAT NO MAN TAKE YOUR CROWN" (see Revelation 3:11). Understand that ALL of us will face some pressure to let go, wherever we are; but in some of the new churches of God people will face more pressures than in others.

Today the Worldwide Church of God is being guided by a totally carnal human leadership! This is something that God is "allowing"! But it is Satan's "doing"! As a result of the pressure of these heresies within WCG, God's people are being scattered. We have no option but to leave WCG.

The scattering is nothing new really. It's all happened before. Remember the faith chapter:

(Of whom the world was not worthy:) THEY WANDERED IN DESERTS, AND [IN] MOUNTAINS, AND [IN] DENS AND CAVES OF THE EARTH. (Hebrews 11:38)

They were scattered!

You remember, years ago, when you studied into the history of God's Church? How God's people had to flee time and again from persecution ... from Asia Minor across the Alpine regions and eventually into North America? They were scattered by persecution. They sought refuge in whatever "cave" they could find.

You also remember what happened after Stephen was stoned and Saul (later Paul) started to persecute the Church?

And Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was A GREAT PERSECUTION against the church which was at Jerusalem; AND THEY WERE ALL SCATTERED ABROAD throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles. (Acts 8:1)

It is always the same thing. Persecution leads to the Church being scattered. Today the doctrinal persecution is more intense than it has been at any other time this century! And true Christians are being "scattered". It is nothing new.

There is no doubt that God has reserved unto Himself a people who have not compromised, who have not bowed the knee to Baal and who are committed to follow Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, "wheresoever He goes" (see Revelation 14:4). But it is equally clear that even the "wise virgins" who do have "oil" are slumbering to some degree and that a cry needs to go out, saying: "the Bridegroom is coming; go out to meet Him" (Matthew 25:6). It is only when the power of the holy people has been completely scattered, when Satan feels that he has actually succeeded, that God takes those who are His to the place of safety.

It is not really going to be the way many of us have speculated over the years ... that God gives the word to the leader: "Right, now tell the Church it is time to go to the place of safety", and the leader then passes the word on through the emergency telephone network.

The word will not really go out until the power of the holy people has been COMPLETELY scattered; until the true Christians are so divided and so scattered into different groups and bodies that THE ONLY WAY to get us together again will be for God to take us to the place of safety and once again THERE form us into one body. As we saw already in Ezekiel:

As a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep [that are] scattered;
SO WILL I SEEK OUT MY SHEEP, AND WILL DELIVER THEM OUT OF ALL PLACES WHERE
THEY HAVE BEEN SCATTERED IN THE CLOUDY AND DARK DAY. (Ezekiel 34:12)

God will not miss a single one of the sheep that are His! We can have total confidence in God's promise to take care of all His scattered sheep, including you and me. What is important for us in this process is that we HOLD FAST to the true teachings we were given and in that way see to it that "no man takes our crown" (see Revelation 3:11).

Frank W. Nelte